

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. Canceled.

2. (Currently Amended) A mail piece verification system for processing mail pieces, the mail pieces having associated therewith respective mail piece data, the system comprising :

a data center in operative communication with a plurality of mail processing centers, the data center including a plurality of account files corresponding to a plurality of postage metering systems; ~~and wherein the data center being adapted to is for: storing~~ store reset data in each of the plurality of account files representative of reset activity associated with the plurality of postage metering systems, respectively; ~~receiving~~ receive respective mail piece data corresponding to the mail pieces from the plurality of mail processing centers; ~~using the respective mail piece data,~~ storing empirical data in each of the plurality of account files representative of mailing activity associated with the plurality of postage metering systems, respectively; ~~and conducting~~ conduct a forensic accounting analysis of the empirical data and the reset data associated with a selected postage metering system having an existing serial number using a previously defined time period over which to conduct the forensic accounting analysis; issue a new serial number to the selected postage metering system to replace the existing serial number if the forensic accounting analysis reveals that the empirical data is not consistent with the reset data for the selected postage metering system; and provide instructions to the plurality of mail processing centers to withhold processing of mail pieces containing the existing serial number while allowing normal processing of mail pieces containing the new serial number.

3. Canceled.

4. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 3, wherein the data center is further adapted to conduct ÷

~~the responsive action includes conducting~~ an inspection of the selected postage metering system if the forensic accounting analysis reveals that the empirical data is not consistent with the reset data for the selected postage metering system.

5. Canceled.

6. Canceled.

7. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 3, wherein the data center is further adapted to issue:

~~the responsive action includes issuing~~ instructions to the plurality of mail processing centers to increase a sample rate for mail pieces including mail piece data corresponding to the selected postage metering system if the forensic accounting analysis reveals that the empirical data is not consistent with the reset data for the selected postage metering system.

8. Canceled.

9. (Currently Amended) A method of operating a mail piece verification system for processing mail pieces, the mail pieces having associated therewith respective mail piece data, the method comprising:

receiving mail pieces at a plurality of mail processing centers that have been prepared by a plurality of postage metering systems;

obtaining the respective mail piece data from the mail pieces;

maintaining a plurality of account files corresponding to the plurality of postage metering systems;

storing reset data in each of the plurality of account files representative of reset activity associated with the plurality of postage metering systems, respectively;

using the respective mail piece data, storing empirical data in each of the plurality of account files representative of mailing activity associated with the plurality of postage metering systems, respectively; and

conducting a forensic accounting analysis of the empirical data and the reset data associated with a selected postage metering system having an existing serial number using a previously defined time period over which to conduct the forensic accounting analysis;

issuing a new serial number to the selected postage metering system to replace the existing serial number if the forensic accounting analysis reveals that the empirical data is not consistent with the reset data for the selected postage metering system;

allowing normal processing of mail pieces containing the new serial number; and

instructing the plurality of mail processing centers to withhold processing of mail pieces containing the existing serial number.

10. Canceled..

11. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 10, further comprising wherein:

~~the responsive action includes~~ conducting an inspection of the selected postage metering system if the forensic accounting analysis reveals that the empirical data is not consistent with the reset data for the selected postage metering system.

12. Canceled.

13. Canceled.

14. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~9~~¹¹, further comprising:

increasing a sample rate at the plurality of mail processing centers for mail pieces including mail piece data corresponding to the selected postage metering system.

15. Cancelled.

16. (Currently Amended) A method of operating a data center for processing data associated with mail pieces and a plurality of postage metering systems for preparing mail pieces, the method comprising:

obtaining reset data representative of reset activity associated with the plurality of postage metering systems;

obtaining empirical data representative of mailing activity associated with the plurality of postage metering systems; and

conducting a forensic accounting analysis of the empirical data and the reset data associated with a selected postage metering system having an existing serial number using a previously defined time period over which to conduct the forensic accounting analysis

issuing a new serial number to the selected postage metering system to replace the existing serial number if the forensic accounting analysis reveals that the empirical data is not consistent with the reset data for the selected postage metering system;

providing instructions to allow normal processing of mail pieces containing the new serial number; and

providing instructions to withhold processing of mail pieces containing the existing serial number.

17. Canceled.

18. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~16~~17, further comprising wherein:

~~the responsive action includes~~ conducting an inspection of the selected postage metering system if the forensic accounting analysis reveals that the empirical data is not consistent with the reset data for the selected postage metering system.

19. Canceled.

20. Canceled.

21. Canceled.